

ADDRESS

AMERICAN COLLEGE

COLLEGE

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TO
THE REV. ALEXANDER MATTHIESON, D.D.

MINISTER OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, MONTREAL

THIS EDITION

IS DEDICATED AS A MARK OF HIGHER RESPECT.

BY THE AUTHOR.

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In the absence of the Principal of the College, it devolves on me to deliver the usual address on the present occasion. Other reasons apart, I feel not a little embarrassed in doing this, when I reflect that for a number of years past it has been done by one who is never listened to but with delight and edification. To speak of his great worth in a place where that is so well known and so highly appreciated, were in me a kind of impudence; suffice it to say, that the revival of the College and its success of late years may in no small degree be traced to the prudence, energy, diligence, and self-denial of Dr Machar. Queen's College owes a large debt of gratitude to that most excellent man.

The object of the humblest school, in the most obscure corner of the country, is to furnish some portion of mental training. But an institution such as this professes to afford to those who come within its walls, a very liberal share of the highest kind of intellectual culture. A college is a place in which minds should be so trained, that they shall be able to instruct and guide multitudes of other minds, who never can enjoy the advantages of a collegiate education. Man is the only creature in this world that requires to be educated by fellow creatures. The brutes have no schoolmaster; God is their great teacher. For we see that each possesses in itself, in those wonderful instincts with which it comes into the world, and which are acted on with governing precision by the laws of nature, all the

guidance necessary for its enjoyment, the full expansion of its powers, and the perpetuation of its species. Man rather subdues, than teaches the brute creatures. He makes them subservient to his enjoyment, but can hardly be said to increase their intelligence by his training, and scarcely ever communicates any knowledge of them which is transmissible, or tends to raise any species in the scale of being. That man comes into the world with scarcely any other capacity than that of learning, but with this to an almost illimitable extent, is a striking proof of the high destiny that awaits him. The creature that is born, not with a little circle of pre-facted instincts, each of which is fitted only to play its part within a narrow sphere of physical influences, but with the capacity of making constant, varied and almost boundless acquisitions of all sorts, is obviously intended for an exceedingly wide range of action, and for highly diversified and durable happiness. That man is not born with his mental powers in a state of perfection, nor is entirely selftaught, nor has his education completed at once, is not defect; but has in it what is really ground for the highest excellence. We see in this, that he is emphatically a creature of progress; is placed under moral, rather than physical laws, and hence for his intellectual and moral culture, has to depend chiefly on the instruction which he may derive from minds superior to his own.

Thus it is, that man has constantly to give or take guidance in order that his powers may be fully expanded, and the true ends of his being secured. God, who is the author of all that is

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good, is the author of this beneficial order of things. And while it is true, that he has appointed many instruments and appliances, subservient to mental culture, it is nevertheless plain, that the grand agent in this is the well-furnished mind pouring out its treasures to those who specially need them. For what is all the knowledge which books contain, but the fruit of such minds for the nourishment of the young and the feeble. Thus it is, that those who by native vigor of intellect, and long and patient toil, have collected a considerable portion of valuable knowledge, and who are animated by right motives, are able in some measure to educate the less-gifted of their fellowmen.

Every seminary of learning, but especially a college, ought to possess men who can teach with efficiency the branches they profess; or the institution is a gross fraud on the public.

Boasting is seldom employed, except by those who specially need it; but, be our need as it may, I feel little inclination to call in the aid of boasting. I have a thorough conviction, that let it be done as subtly or gracefully as it may, it can go but a little way to hide real deficiency, and when the hour of failure comes it greatly deepens the shame of those who have employed it. If there be found, as I trust there shall, well directed, patient and laborious effort, by capable men in each department, Queen's College cannot fail in the long run, to furnish satisfactory evidence to the country, that it is able to afford a liberal, solid and useful education.

Our object, nor dare we aim at less, ought to be to furnish such an education to the young men

who come up here, as shall fit them for occupying a respectable place in any one of the learned professions to which they may aspire. That the college shall place, fully within the reach of every diligent student, the means for a fair scholarship, and thorough intellectual training, is what we venture to promise. With less, the patrons of the institution ought not to be satisfied.

But, young gentlemen, this promise will never be implemented unless you do your part. A college with angels for its Professors would prove an utter failure, if its students were naturally imbecile, disobedient, or invincibly slothful. All that the most accomplished and laborious teachers can do, is to point out the path that leads to intellectual eminence, and provide the suitable means for attaining this. They cannot give brains; nor can they be held responsible beyond a limited extent, for those pure and lofty motives in which lie all the real force of right effort on the part of students. Without a reasonable share of natural mental gifts, no young man should be encouraged to study for any of the learned professions. To urge a young man to do so, who has no natural aptitude for intellectual toil, is not only a great folly, but a great crime, which finds but a poor apology in the ignorance or vanity of parents or guardians. In this way many young men are rendered useless and miserable, who might have been servicable & happy in those pursuits in life, which require more of manual than mental labour. To know what the native elements of our character are, and what sort of strength lies

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to them, or may be drawn thence, is not only itself valuable knowledge, but without it all other knowledge may be valueless. It is not, however, merely with natural weakness of powers, or untoward mental tastes that Colleges Institutions in this country are tried, and their best directed efforts often rendered abortive. From the want in many parts of the country, of the higher order of Schools, young men frequently come up to College exceedingly ill prepared to reap the full benefit of the labours of Professors in the higher departments of learning. And while it were not wise, in the present circumstances of the country, to demand very high qualifications in entrants, as this would deprive many very worthy young men from entering College at all, yet such as have labored under the previous disadvantages, should never forget that if they are to realize the full advantages of a Curriculum, it can only be by extraordinary diligence. Such diligence has been witnessed, I believe, in not a few instances in this institution. Nor can anything be more interesting than to see the young man who came up but poorly prepared, laboring with such energy, that he not only reaps the full advantages of his Professors' instruction, but at length comes fairly abreast of even those students who may have enjoyed a superior preparatory course. That young man may not turn out a man of genius—for God only can make such—but that college must be false to its profession that does not at least make him a scholar, capable of filling an useful and honorable position in life. For if labor like faith cannot

remove mountains, it can at least cut a road through them, or bravely scale them. A laborious student—especially the student who toils to make up the deficiencies of the school-room, that he may reap the full advantages of the classroom,—has everything to hope and hardly anything to fear, unless the fear of injury to health from excessive application. It is very sad when this happens; and yet I do not think it occurs very frequently. I have heard of many martyrs to study. The cases have been but few that have fallen under my own observation. But truth compels me to say that I have known many students, naturally of good parts, but who, from frivolity and sloth, forfeited all the advantages which a college education might have afforded them. I apprehend that the victims to sloth are far more numerous than the martyrs to study. Seats of learning have never been more thoroughly perverted than when made the haunts of idleness. The minds of young men, dissipated by this, are thoroughly prepared for almost every other sort of dissipation. The idle student is a pest in his class, a sore affliction to those who feel an interest in him, and is almost certain to become a burden and a blot on society. I would fain hope that those I now address are in the main earnest lads, who have come here determined to work, and who have no faith that they shall ever be anything, but by God's grace and hard labor. The vain and the thoughtless may dream of success and happiness in life without labor; but the wise know well there is no road to either but through severe toil. He who supposes himself a born genius,

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who does not require to labor like other men to attain success, would be nearer the truth did he suppose himself a born fool. This self-deception is doomed to certain and shameful disappointment. God, alike by his curse as his blessing, condemns the folly. Without industry no man was ever even respectable as a scholar, and without great labor no one need ever hope to reach eminence in any department of learning. It were a pitiable error to suppose that there ever has been a man who has added to the original stock of human knowledge, or whose works have enlarged or directed the minds of his fellowmen, who had not, at least in his youth, been a hard student. Newton indeed declared that if he was superior to other men, it was merely because he labored more. I shall not stop to enquire whether there be more of truth or modesty in this saying. It is enough to remark, that even this extraordinary man regarded labor as indispensable to success in scientific pursuits. After what has been stated, you will not be surprised to hear me say, that from what we owe to our own conscience and honor—from what we owe to your parents and guardians, and to your own dearest interests in future life, we shall feel compelled to enforce rigorous attention to study. Indeed, I rather fear—and now is the time to throw out the hint—that the young man who has come here to trifle, will, upon the whole, find Queen's College an uncomfortable place. And, gentlemen, why should it be otherwise? You have come here to work, that you may be fitted for the honorable labors to which you are looking forward in life. This must never for a mo-

ment be forgotten by you. It dare not at least be forgotten by us. In countries, in which wealth has accumulated in few hands, a College education may be sought by opulent parents for their sons, as one of the luxuries or embellishments of life. It is needless to enquire if this be a wise or safe mode of spending superfluous wealth, as but few of that class of persons to which I refer are as yet found in this Province. In many respects this is one of the finest countries on the face of the earth. It is extraordinary that so little should have been known, till of late, of its vast resources; yet you do not need to be told that from the man who cuts down its forests, to the man who occupies the highest social position in society, it is a *land of labor*. Whatever, therefore, is to be your place in society, it must be a place of labor. The young Canadian who is ignorant of this, has yet his first lesson to learn. In all the departments of life, the fairest prospects lie open to the virtuous, patient and industrious. But what prospects of future usefulness or comfort can he count on, who through sloth or disobedience, utterly fails while in college to acquire those habits of industry and those stores of knowledge which can alone fit him for the demands that will be made on his resources, so soon as he enters on his professional career.

The greater part of the young men attending this institution are looking forward to the arduous task of instructing, or in some way directing, the minds of their fellow men. This, whether done in the pulpit, in the halls of legislation, or at the bar, is the highest vocation in which scho-

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labors can be employed. To instruct and guide
 the minds of others, has never been easy work:
 But to him who studies the spirit of the times—
 and no man can serve his day and generation
 who does not—it must be apparent that this is
 every hour becoming a more difficult and more
 responsible task. The times of every man have
 possibly been to the reflecting times of wonder;
 but surely the age in which we live is eminently
 an age of wonders. On the one hand, there is
 more than enough to surpass the hopes of the
 most sanguine; on the other, not a little to
 awaken fears in the bravest hearts. But wheth-
 er we look at the bright or gloomy side, we can-
 not fail but see, *that he who is to work on the mind*
of the present and coming generations, must possess
vast energy, and no ordinary attainments. For
 under the influence of *active thought*, all things
 are now moving with new and amazing velocity,
 while a feverish and most unhealthy state of the
 passions pervades every fibre of society. Wheth-
 er we like it or no, the day has come in which
 he who would do the work of the day, for the
 moral and intellectual good of his fellowmen,
 must gird himself for the task, after a fashion
 unknown to our fathers. We say there is a
 bright side, very bright; a dark side, very dark.
 For did we look merely at the progress that man
 is making in physical agencies there would be
 room for nothing but exultation and hope.
 Science, which for nearly two thousand years
 had haughtily occupied the lofty and barren
 heights of speculation, has been allured or com-
 pelled to come down into common life and put
 her hand to work. She has at length touched

all the arts and appliances of life, and with her magic wand has given to these all energy and wonderful impulse. Nature has been awakened from her thousand dormitories, and is made to pour forth her varied treasures for the benefit of man. The mightiest, as well as the humblest of elements, have been pressed into his service. He has harnessed his chariot to steam, and made the lightning his post, to carry his wishes in a moment to the remotest part of the earth. While at the same time he subtly extracts from the secret storehouses of nature, innumerable agents which are made subservient to the comfort and embellishment of life. Indeed, such have of late been the discoveries of physical agents, and their application to all sorts of mechanical operations, that the mind would be overwhelmed with painful astonishment, did not the rapid march of these events make the wonderful common. In all this we see amazing triumphs of mind in detecting and applying the laws of nature, as well as much good that may be hoped for from these results, which shall contribute to the physical enjoyment, and indirectly to the social and moral elevation of man. Nor can I forbear to notice what a beautiful illustration these discoveries afford of what a few great minds can do for the world. Little do mankind think, as they move on in the beaten path, what ingenuity and labor were required to discover and open the way. It is, nevertheless, true, that for the greater part of the physical comforts which men possess, they are indebted to a few original thinkers. Millions, in various parts of the earth, use daily the fruits of some inventive genius whose name they

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possibly never heard. That original mind, in its works, travels on, and age after age, diffuses its benefits. Nor can we suppose that this sort of discovery is ended; nature has not yet given up all her secrets. And let me hope, that there may be trained in this institution some, who, by their laborious investigations, may add to the stock of future discoveries. But be all this as it may, shall we not hope from what has even already been achieved by physical science, that man shall be made perfectly happy? This opinion, sometimes dogmatically expressed, but oftener surmised, is now held very extensively. No delusion can be greater. It is not by the agencies, potent as they are, of iron, steam, and electricity, that the Golden Age is to be brought back, or the millenium reached by man. By mere physical appliances human beings never can be made happy. Man is so emphatically a moral creature, that his happiness, in all his social and civil relationships, is at last found to hinge on his moral and spiritual condition. If this be essentially wrong, all experience shews that just the more abundant the sources of physical enjoyment are, the more perilous is the state of society, and all the more difficult does it become to guide its movements, so as to secure its happiness.

Let me not be mistaken. Science is good. It is one of God's precious gifts. And all that it enables man to accomplish, by a knowledge of the laws of nature, is good in its place; yet it must ever be borne in mind, that something far other is necessary to enable man properly to use the rich fruits, which his science aids him in

drawing from nature. The truth is, if man be not taught the relation in which he stands to his God, and what, as an accountable creature, he owes to Him, and what he owes of relative duties to his fellow-creatures, as well as the motives to the performance of all this, his attainments in physical science, with all that he may have extracted from material nature by its aid, will utterly fail to make him happy. The intense activity which these discoveries have infused into every department in society renders a *very high order of moral guidance specially needful*. But you are now preparing to be intellectual and spiritual guides in a world in which all things are moving with a velocity which awakens astonishment not unmingled with fear. Now, what I desiderate is, not that your love for science should be damped, or your efforts to apply it to the various arts and mechanical contrivances be abated, but that, in addition, you strive to fit yourselves by high intellectual, moral and religious culture, for the exigencies of the times. The world ever needed spiritual guidance, but if the views we have given be correct, it never needed it more than now. For, very plainly, without the *morale*, all that we may amass of the *materials* will prove a curse and not a blessing. He who faithfully teaches men their duties to God and their fellow creatures, or labors to give these duties a healthy play in the sphere in which he moves, may never acquire the fame of genius, yet, assuredly he is one of the world's greatest benefactors. Indeed, without such laborers, it is found in the long run, that all others labor in vain. Men forget this, or contemptu-

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dously deny it, yet there is no law of nature
 with which we are familiar, more certain in its
 results. If great physical discoveries could be
 made and preserved—a thing questionable—
 among a people thoroughly irreligious and im-
 moral, there can be no question that they would
 rather increase than lessen the wretchedness of
 such a people. What could it avail a country
 to have scientific chemists, engineers, and inge-
 nious artists, if the common school-room, the bar,
 the bench, and the pulpit were occupied by sel-
 fish, vain, and unprincipled men? Even the
 wealth of a people is doomed to perish, if not
 under the safeguard of a healthy morality. The
 world cannot learn too soon, what it should have
 learnt from the first, that if men disown the moral
 government of God, the laws of his physical uni-
 verse will not obey them for good, but war
 against them for evil, until they are destroyed by
 the instruments they have impiously wrought
 with, and the benefits which they have ungrate-
 fully abused. Let there be a true faith in God,
and then faith in nature cannot be misplaced.
 But the error, or rather the atheism of our times
 is to look to nature, or the successful triumphs
 of physical science over nature, for all that man
 needs to make him happy. You will require to
 study this well to be able to see the relation in
 which man must stand to God in order to be in
 harmony with the laws of nature, so that modern
 inventions shall minister to his good. He who
 has but superficial views on this subject will be
 ill prepared for the performance of many of those
 weighty duties to which you are looking forward.
 But, as mental laborers in the world, you do

not only require to comprehend the fallacy to which I have referred, as springing out of false views of the achievements of reason and physical science, but also to understand well what changes have taken place, or are now in progress, in that *ancient order of things* by which society was held together, for better or worse. Much of the spirit as well as the form of old social and civil institutions is either entirely gone or is rapidly disappearing from all civilized nations. It will almost provoke a smile to hear me so much as name feudalism. Although this as an institution can hardly be said ever to have gained a footing on this continent, yet to what a wonderful extent in one or other of its modifications it has influenced not only the past history but the whole of the present condition of European society, no one needs to be told who is at all familiar with the subject. It is not my intention in this discourse to notice at large either the excellencies or faults of that ancient institution, or to point out the sentiments or feelings to which it gave rise. It should not, however, be overlooked, that while the healthful development of the human mind ought naturally to throw off antiquated forms that have become dead, not only as useless but pernicious, it is matter of regret that much of the valuable spirit which animated these should so often perish with them. That multitudes of men should have seen in a fellow creature, merely because their hereditary prince or chieftain, the concrete symbol of all law and authority, and should have given to his will a ready obedience, was assuredly an order of things, except in rare cases, liable to the most

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serious about. Under such a system liberty, in the proper sense, could scarcely, if at all, exist. Yet no one can fail to see that the *willing obedience* which sprang from respect to authority was the pervading spirit of these ancient institutions, and was indeed that which for ages held society together. These ancient forms, we say, have perished, or are only seen like dim shadows on the outskirts of civilization. No one need regret this. Yet, let me ask, what is to become of all our modern achievements in science and art, yea, of our civilization itself, if the willing obedience to authority, and respect for those who are clothed with it, shall also vanish from the earth. Precious jewels have sometimes been found curiously stowed up in the old garment of the miser. The coat is of no value, yet the wise man will not toss it away till he has extracted the treasure from its many-colored patches. Had this been done with ancient institutions, modern society would have been richer in all that constitutes true greatness, virtue, and happiness. I scarcely know any habit of thought more valuable for a student to acquire than that of being able to detect what is precious in the spirit of old and worn-out social institutions. To distinguish betwixt the precious and the vile—to know what to preserve as of lasting worth, and what to throw away as worthless, is the true secret of all reform. Those who can make this distinction—and what is it, indeed, but seeing truth—will neither give to ancient nor modern institutions a homage farther than they find in them those unchanging truths, which are alike suitable for all times.

An unquestioning faith in the wisdom of the past, so characteristic of our ancestors, is admittedly not the prominent fault of the present day. The *und-wort* has now to submit to be *erwogen* and questioned, and if she cannot give a reason for her faith, her testimony is no longer admissible. No one who loves truth, and has an unshaken confidence in its power, and who desires the growth and liberty of the human mind, will lament that it should be so. And yet who needs to be told that the transition from an unquestioning credulity to a quibbling skepticism is easy, and that if the former paralyzes the powers of the mind by inaction, the latter as surely poisons them by vanity. That all men now profess to reason, or at least to ask for reasons, renders it peculiarly needful in the true reasoner to have a mind active, vigorous, and well-furnished, else he can neither be an acceptable instructor, nor an able leader of the minds of others. The intellectual laborer who has not thoroughly studied this remarkable phase of modern society, will often be at fault in his speculations, and will sadly fail in his practice. In that unquestioning faith to which we have referred there was at least the valuable admission of many first principles—and that these were unalterable. This was a precious element in the popular mind for the honest intellectual laborer to work with. But it is much the fashion now either to deny all first principles in morals and politics, or to consider them as all adrift and only to be laid hold of to answer the ends of a temporary expediency. Much it is expedient, but it can never be expedient to surrender any one eternal truth. In a word, society is every

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day shifting more and more into a condition in which, for its proper guidance, a far larger share of talent and labor will be required than in ages of less excitement, less doubt, and more faith.

Men of high intellectual powers and of high motives have now become absolutely indispensable, not only for the guidance, but for the existence of society. Under God this is the *new force* which must take the place of worn out institutions. We boast—and with some reason—of the wide diffusion of knowledge in our day, yet it should not be forgotten that a superficial knowledge, while it leads men scornfully to cast away the lessons of experience, may also tend to make them the ready dupes of every new and plausible imposture.

That all men can now read is of itself a blessing. But when all read and few think, the fear is not wholly groundless, that society in its religious as well as civil relations may, to a fatal extent, come under the power of specious but unprincipled demagogues. In saying this, I make no special reference to any particular party or sect; but merely utter what I deem a needful warning for all. For true it is that the feudalism of demagogues may be as destructive to all real liberty, and more hurtful to every virtue, than any sort of monarchical despotism under which the world has ever groaned. If men are enslaved, degraded and rendered miserable, it appears to me of no consequence whether it be done by one despot in his palace, or by a number of despots on the hustings and through the press. Very plainly the evils which we fear, and which threaten to neutralize

all the advantages which science and art have achieved for man, are traceable to a defective intellectual and religious education. Unless this be mended, everything will go wrong. Now, to do something for this, in one sphere or other, will, I trust, be the great end of your professional labour in life. What a hopeful position does that student occupy whose bosom is burning with the wish to be qualified for making his fellow-men more wise, more virtuous, and more pious. But let it sink deep into your heart, that if you are to accomplish aught of this, you must have force of mind, and purity of motives.—Men of this stamp can alone reform and direct their fellowmen. To correct inveterate evils—to teach new truths, or apply old ones, so as to enlighten the understanding, and powerfully influence the conscience, is a work which the superficial thinker need hardly attempt. Nor is success to be expected from mere strength of intellect or stores of knowledge, unless the heart is animated by pure motives. Bad men may have powerful intellect, but merely by the force of this, they have never directly contributed to reform the social, political or religious institutions of the world. That God can bring good out of evil, and make the wrath of man to praise Him, is true, and yet it may also be true, that when he intends to build up and preserve, he employs the good and the wise as his instruments. Hoping that you may by Him in one way or other be made instrumental in this work, I cannot too earnestly impress on you the necessity of beginning early to act from pure and high motives. Of the philosophy of motives it is not my intention at present to speak;

further than to observe, that it is impossible to
 overcome the influence of right motives, not only
 for the acquisition of knowledge, but also for its
 beneficial application. Indeed the real weakness
 of many students, and their utter failure when
 they become professional men, may be traced to
 the lamentable want of right motives. Permit
 me a single remark on this—Much mischief has
 been done, not only to the heart and conscience,
 but also to the intellect of young men in College,
 by making the love of fame the chief motive for
 study. I do not say that this motive ought to be
 wholly set aside, but ere it can be safely cherish-
 ed, and produce healthy results, it must be purifi-
 ed and made subordinate to a far higher class of
 motives. If the applause of your fellowmen is
 the spontaneous manifestation of esteem and love
 for your excellence, you ought assuredly to find
 in it a very powerful motive to aim at still higher
 excellence. This, however, as well as every
 other motive, will be feeble, and in the end prove
 utterly worthless, if ye seek not first the appro-
 bation of God in a good conscience. He who re-
 gards God as the giver of those powers he pos-
 sesses, and of the means by which he is enabled to
 cultivate them, and who feels deeply that he must
 at last give an account of the talents entrusted
 to him, can hardly fail to be diligent and suc-
 cessful in every duty. For he who looks at his
 talents in this light, does not employ them for
 the gratification of his vanity, or to minister to
 any mere selfish passion. He feels that he ought
 to employ all his talents for the glory of God; in
 diffusing a knowledge of his perfections, and thus
 labor to make mankind wiser and happier.

In no country is there a fairer prospect of probable usefulness to well educated youth than in this. It is probable that some of the future students may live to see a larger population in Canada than England contains at the present day. Assuredly those who are to take a part in preparing the country for the great order of things that awaits it, have now a most solemn task to perform. For what its civil and religious institutions, and its whole social condition shall be when it numbers some twelve or fifteen millions will very much depend on what is now the character of the youths who attend its seminaries of learning. Around these youthful literary aspirants of the Province, now cluster its brightest hopes, or its darkest forebodings. If they shall come forth superficial thinkers, vain, reckless, and ambitious men, distinguished for nothing so much as that cunning and acuteness so important for selfish and temporary success, it is as easy to see as it is painful to contemplate what the results must be to vast multitudes who are to be influenced by them. But if—which God grant—the students of this and similar institutions shall go forth with minds richly endowed with human and divine learning, and with their hearts deeply imbued with lofty and pure motives, then may the highest hopes be cherished for the future prosperity, peace and order of the province.

To work then, gentlemen, to work. Begin and close every day with earnest supplications to God for his blessing, and let the resolution be formed, and never for a moment quit your breast.—That the day this Session closes, each shall be able to say to himself—I have not in any way dishonored

the name of Student; I have not disappointed my Professors; I shall not be ashamed to go home and meet those parents, brothers, and sisters, whose hands years over me, and whose tenderest hopes are bound up in me.